

## *The Stars Announced His Arrival!*

*Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king,  
behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying,  
“Where is He who has been born king of the Jews?  
For we saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.”*

A detail in the Christmas story has prompted countless speculations in the ensuing years: What was the “star” that alerted the “wise men” to Jesus’ birth?

It’s a question worthy of study. For in pondering the event, even with our limited understanding, we are confronted by the reality that the astronomical creation itself powerfully proclaimed the birth of its Creator!

Take note of those “wise men” – called “Magi,” in the Greek.

Despite the words of Christmas carols, these were not three *kings* – yet they were “king-makers.” The Magi were a priestly caste from Persia whose members descended from the Medes. During the age when Jesus was born, the Magi served as the part of a governing council in the Parthian kingdom.

Among their duties and privileges, the Magi had the absolute right to select kings in their realm. These were powerful men who traveled with a military escort. Wherever they went, they caused a stir.

And one of their unique passions was astrology – the study of stars and constellations, their movements and their significance. Among their insights into the night skies, the Magi incorporated some Jewish ideas, possibly from Daniel, one of the most celebrated wise men in the age when Persia rose to power.

For instance, these ancient astrologers – like their Jewish counterparts – regarded Jupiter as the star of kings, while Saturn was regarded as the star of the Messiah. They also assigned meaning to the 12 regions of the sky now known as the zodiac, with each one representing both a nation and one of Israel’s tribes.

There are two plausible theories about what brought the Magi to Jerusalem.

One theory holds that the Magi witnessed the overlap of Jupiter and Saturn within the zodiac region of Pisces, regarded as the “House of the Hebrews.” This overlap happened three times during 7 B.C., in such a way that it could have led the Magi straight to Jerusalem and nearby Bethlehem.

A second theory, holds that the Magi witnessed a “dance of stars” between Jupiter and the star Regulus (the “king star”) in 2 B.C., occurring in the zodiac region assigned to the Tribe of Judah – Messiah’s tribe.

Which of these events drew the Magi to Bethlehem? I’m not qualified to say. A compelling argument can be made for either explanation, as both events would have been packed with symbolism.

But here’s what we must recognize: the very fact that we can know which astronomical events would have piqued their interest depends on the clock-like regularity of the stars and planets. Our Creator designed the universe in such a way that its movements and patterns are measurable and predictable.

When the Magi set off for Jerusalem to greet the newborn King of the Jews, they committed to a journey of five or six weeks, minimum, simply to get there. Such a lengthy trip is not taken on a mere whim! These men were *certain* of what – and of *Whom* – they would find.

It was no accident that the Magi recognized the celestial signs pointing to Jesus’ birth. God caused exiled Jews to exert powerful influence over the astrological philosophy of this pagan ruling caste, prompting them to recognize this particular sign. And God brought each star and planet into line at precisely the proper time to draw them to Bethlehem shortly after the birth of His Son.

There’s nothing coincidental in these events. The stars and planets didn’t suddenly start doing things they had never done before. No, their predictable movements coincided in a way that uniquely indicated the birth of God’s Son at the proper time.

God designed the creation to this end. He is the One “who stretched out the heavens, ... who made the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the chambers of the south” (Job. 9:8-9). Isaiah says, “Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of His might, and because He is strong in power not one is missing” (Isa. 40:26).

Our God set the universe in motion so that “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge” (Ps. 19:1-2).

The very creation, in all of its heavenly splendor, was meant to announce and celebrate the birth of God's Son. From the moment He spoke them into being, they were commanded to bring forth this sign at its proper time.

And they did what God commanded!

Psalm 148 commands:

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, all His hosts! Praise Him, sun and moon, praise Him, all you shining stars! ... Kings of the earth, and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! Young men and maidens together, old men and children! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted; His majesty is above earth and heaven.*

The ancient Magi saw precisely what God intended them to see.

Ever since the creation was "born," it was preparing for the opportunity to announce the greatest birth ever. Jesus arrived at the time and place ordained from eternity, and heavenly signs appeared at the perfect time to draw wise men from distant lands to greet and honor Him.

Now the creation awaits His return. Just as God prepared His creation to proclaim Jesus' birth, so He is preparing His creation to receive Him again, when He returns to make all things new.

We don't know when that time will arrive, any more than the ancient Magi knew when the stars would line up to proclaim Messiah's birth. But we *do* know that the day is drawing closer with every passing moment.

Until the Day arrives and the creation proclaims His return, let us imitate the Magi's eagerness to worship the King whose birth was declared by the stars.

And let us marvel at the fact that all of the creation joins us in rejoicing at the birth of our Savior, who came to bring us peace without end!